Howard Soil & Water
Conservation District

Staff & Beaver Water Quality Project

311 7th St SW #2
Cresco, IA 52136-1865

Phone: 563-547-3040
Fax: 563-547-3701

Neil Shaffer: Project Coordinator

Mehmert Tile and Excavation
8635 Highway 9
Lime Springs IA 52155

The Staff/Beaver Water Quality Project is supported in part or in total by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Division of Soil Conservation, through the Water Protection Fund (WPF) and by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under the federal Non-Point Source Management Program (Section 319 of the Clean Water Act). Technical assistance is provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service. All programs and services are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, or handicap. Project sponsors and cooperators include: DSC/IDALS, IADNR, USDA/NRCS, Howard SWCD, UIRWA, RC&D Postville, FSA, UIR Pheasants Forever, Lime Springs Fish & Game Club, IOWA WATER and Riceville FFA.

ATTRACT WATERFOWL

Wetland Restoration

Have you considered a wetland restoration project on your farm? These projects not only increase wildlife habitat, but they do a good job of reducing nitrates from tile outlets before entering a stream.

There are several ways to fund these projects. The Staff & Beaver Water Quality Project has funds available for up to 75% cost share. Through CRP there are two programs including the CP23 Wetland Restoration with 50% cost share and the CP27/28 Farmable Wetland Buffer with 50% cost share and a 40% practice incentive payment.

The Environmental Quality Incentive Program may also have cost share available to construct a wetland pond. Another source of funding could be the United States Fish & Wildlife Service.

Most wetland ponds have an average depth of eighteen inches and gradual slopes along the perimeter. The shape of the area should be irregular with peninsulas and islands to maximize the amount of shoreline.

The amount of manipulation varies depending on the amount of drainage tile, soil type and proximity to a flood plain. Existing tile will be replaced with non-perforated tile or the tile can be cut to restore the hydrology of the area. Shallow excavation with a dozer may also be used to create the desired affect.

A buffer will be seeded around the wetland to reduce erosion and improve water quality. Native grasses and wild flowers will be seeded to maximize the wildlife habitat for shelter and food.

Staff & Beaver Water Quality Project

Spring 2007 Newsletter

Project Focusing on Water Quality

The Staff and Beaver Creek Water Quality Project had a very successful year in 2006 for projects in the watersheds. There were 28 CRP practices installed including waterways, filter strips, wetland restorations and windbreaks. 5000 feet of terraces were installed, two wetlands were developed with shallow water excavations and 65 acres of no-till were enrolled.

This was a dramatic increase of conservation practices compared to the year prior to the project being implemented. The added attention in the area has resulted in a reduction of sediment being delivered to the streams. This reduction is one way to mark the progress and effectiveness of the watershed project and the individual practices implemented.

2007 has already seen an increase of practices with 37 CRP practices signed up, 3700 feet of terraces installed and several other owners and operators interested in new practices.

The Staff and Beaver Water Quality Project has cost share and incentives available for Non-CRP Waterways, No-Till/Strip-Till, Nutrient Management, Spring Nitrate Tests, Stalk Nitrate Tests, Terraces, Waste Management Systems and Wetlands Development.

Other funding sources include CRP, EQIP and state cost share programs available at the NRCS office. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service also has funding available for wetland restoration.

Sign Up for Waterway Construction

Now is the time to stop in the office and signup for waterway construction for the spring or fall seasons. CRP eligible waterways have 50% cost share with an additional 40% practice incentive payment and rental payments for approximately ten years.

Eligibility will be determined by the FSA office based on cropping history. If the area is not eligible for a CRP waterway there are funds available to cost share up to 75% through the Staff and Beaver Project.

Cost share is available for the construction, seeding, fertilizing and installation of fabric checks.

Once the proper funding source is selected we will design your waterway based on a field survey. Please contact the office as soon as possible so that we may start the process and you may secure a contractor to complete your project in a timely manner.

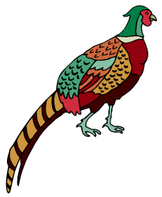
Volume 1, Issue 2

Spring 2007

Conservation Goals:

- Improve Water Quality
- Control Erosion
- Enhance Wildlife Habitat
- Increase Net Farm Income

Inside this issue:



Wildlife Habitat A Win Win Proposition

Wildlife Habitat and CSP

For those operators who have CSP contracts in the Turkey River and Wapsipinicon River watersheds wildlife habitat became the key to entering into a Tier 3 contract.

For anyone entering into a Tier 3 contract you need 3% to 5% of the total farmland left to wildlife habitat. This can be non-crop areas less than 10 acres, CRP filter strips, waterways, riparians and wetland restorations.

All streams need to be buffered with grass at least 30 feet to meet the minimum requirement for a Tier 3 contract. CRP filter strips and riparians offer the best solution.

Another CRP option for land without streams and wetlands is the CRP field windbreak. This practice of trees and shrubs will have 2 to 8 rows planted on the north and west sides of cropped fields. Each of the CRP buffers offer annual rental rates and cost share for implementation.

Food plots are also an option to meet program requirements.

CSP encompasses many aspects of a farming operation with wildlife being just one of those components, but it is one that is needed to maximize the benefits of the CSP program.

Public Safety

Living Snow Fences

Snow fences have been an effective barrier to catch snow from drifting onto roadways for many years. The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) has a practice available called the living snow fence. The practice allows one to three rows of trees and shrubs to be planted 150 to 180 feet from the road edge on the north and west side.

The snow catch area is also eligible to be enrolled into CRP. The area would be planted to native grasses for added snow catch and enhanced wildlife habitat.

Benefits include:

- Protect against prevailing winds to manage snow and decrease snow removal costs
- Enhance public safety
- Establish wildlife habitat
- Control erosion
- Cost share available
- Annual rental payments

Rewarding Good Stewards

Conservation Security Program - CSP

Are you ready for CSP in the Upper Iowa watershed? We don't know when this watershed will be selected but we do know there are some things you can do to prepare for when it is selected.

First of all, nutrient management will play a significant role in CSP. Current soil tests will need to have been taken with samples at least every 10 acres. So if your soil tests are older than four years and were taken with samples greater than 10 acres you need to have soil tests taken on all your fields. This includes pastures if you fertilize them.

Another important area for attention is your application of fertilizer. Fertilizer should not be over applied. Iowa State University recommendations should be followed. Pay close attention to manure nutrient values and crop rotation. Corn following alfalfa will have different recommendations than corn following corn. Also all soil erosion concerns must be addressed and all ephemeral gullies need to be seeded.

CRP Filter Strip Promotion

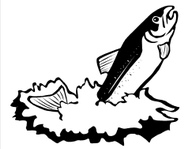
Landowners in the Staff and Beaver watersheds will soon be contacted about enrolling land along those streams into the CRP filter strip program. District Technician Nathan Peterson has been sending letters to property owners along the stream who currently do not have filter strips and may be eligible for the buffer practice.

This program pays an annual rental payment up to 15 years and has cost share available for seeding the area. We recommend planting the area to native grasses for maximum filtering effect and for the additional wildlife habitat it creates.

Rental rates are based on the top three soil types within the buffer and may range from $130 to $160 per acre. There is also a onetime signing incentive payment of $100 per acre at the time of signup.

In 2006 over 44 acres along the streams in the Staff and Beaver watersheds were protected by seeding these filter strip areas. Already 21 acres are planned in 2007.

Anyone who is interested in planting trees on the filter strip may be eligible for the CRP Riparian Buffer. This area can be planted up to 180 feet from the edge of the stream.



Clean Water

Coordinator's Comments

My name is Neil Shaffer and I was hired by the Howard Soil and Water Conservation District as the project coordinator for the Staff and Beaver Water Quality Project in January 2006. Prior to this I was employed by the district as a technician.

I am a lifelong resident of the county and farm with my mother near Lime Springs on the family dairy farm.

In the last fourteen months I have had the opportunity to work with several land owners and operators in the watersheds to assist them in applying several different conservation practices.

For those of you who I have not met, I look forward to working with you.

Water quality is a priority shared with those in our community, the state of Iowa and our nation. It is the goal of this project to improve the water quality of the Staff and Beaver Creeks. Working together we will achieve our goals and improve our valuable natural resource.

"Conservation is contagious! The more conservation practices applied to the land the more interest you will generate within your watershed."

-Neil Shaffer, Project Coordinator

No-Till Incentive Program

Those operators who are interested in doing no-till for both corn and soybeans may receive a $30.00 per acre one-time payment as long as they agree to plant no-till for five years. The maximum number of acres you may enroll is 500 acres.

This program is available through the Staff and Beaver Water Quality Project.

Studies have shown that by converting traditional cultivation and planting techniques to no-till you will reduce the amount of nitrates reaching the streams.

Reducing nitrate levels within the Staff and Beaver Creeks is one of the goals of the project.

There are many other benefits of switching to no-till including reduced soil compaction, reduced soil erosion and savings in energy costs.

No-Till

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